

**Best Friends - Avidfangirlforlife -
Once Upon a Time (TV) [Archive
of Our Own]**

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Rating:

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Category:

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Once Upon a Time (TV)

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Best Friends

Avidfangirlforlife

Summary:

High School AU in which Regina is in love with Emma and believes it to be unrequited.

Work Text:

You and Emma Swan have been best friends ever since your first day of school. The circumstances under which the two of you had met are something you will remember forever. It had been playtime, a time you had been so very nervous for, and a boy had come over to you. First, he had asked you about the two women who had dropped

you off. Five year old you had responded with “My Mums?”, very confused as to why the boy had to ask.

Immediately, he had started to tease you by saying that having two mummies was weird, and that it made you a freak. He had jeered at you and you had found yourself with tears in your eyes. Until, that is, Emma Swan had appeared. Tiny but fierce, with green eyes so serious it was almost hard to believe she was the same age as you.

For a moment she had listened to the boy tease you, calling you all sorts of names that you wouldn’t understand until you asked about them after school. She listened even as she bent down towards the ground and scooped up a handful of dirt from the playground floor. The whole time her face hadn’t changed. It stayed solemn and thoughtful.

Calmly, she had blinked at the boy in front of you and then she had thrown the handful of dirt in his eyes. Paying no attention as the boy started to bawl, in both surprise and pain, she had turned to you as she wiped her hands on her jeans. For the first time her face had cracked into an enormous grin, so genuine it was infectious.

In that moment she had become your saviour. From then on, she had been your knight in shining armour, always there to save you or support you as the situation called for. No matter how tough the going, she had stuck with you through thick and thin. She had become your biggest defender and your greatest friend.

From that very first moment on the playground of your elementary school, the two of you had just clicked. No problem had been too great for the two of you to surmount. No secret had been too big for the two of you. Your friendship was open and honest. Sharing your innermost thoughts was a welcome part of any given day.

Now though, that was the problem. Or, at the very least, it was a very large part of it. You have a problem, a rather big one at that, and it is something that you can’t tell her. After all, is there really any way to tell your best friend that you hate her boyfriend? Is there a nice way of putting that you hate his existence with a fiery passion that couldn’t normally be linked to your character.

As if that wasn’t enough of a dilemma, you most certainly can’t tell her that a substantial part of your dislike of her boyfriend stems from jealousy. Jealousy that exists because you are deeply in love with her. That would be ridiculous. And selfish.

The two of you have a strictly platonic relationship. That is the way it is meant to be. Your relationship is a deep and meaningful

friendship, with not even the remotest possibility of it forming into something very different. For a start, Emma is very straight. You know that sexuality is a spectrum and is incredibly fluid (that was something your mums had taught you from the moment you were old enough to understand the concept) but Emma had never shown the slightest interest in the fairer sex.

Plus, even if she was into women, there was very little chance of her being into you. Especially as she had a boyfriend, whom she was very, very into. The boyfriend that you had watched her pine over and cry over for the first half of your junior year. The boyfriend that you eventually (although only half-heartedly) encouraged her to ask out. The one that you secretly cried yourself to sleep over for more than a month.

She had a boyfriend. Whom she insisted on staying with even when he was a jerk and treated her like dirt. She let the man walk all over her and treat her like crap. The fact that he could bring himself to act in such a way, when Emma was one of the loveliest people you had ever met, made you hate him all the more.

Many times, you had listened to her vent about how he was ignoring her again. Or about how she had caught him kissing another girl under the bleachers. Or about how he had taken her out for dinner and spent the whole time flirting with the pretty waitress and ignoring her. Or about how she hadn't seen him in days because he "just needed his space right now". No, you can't tell her the truth.

You can't tell her the truth, no matter how much you long to. You long to tell her that you've been in love with her since the two of you were thirteen, in middle school. You long to tell her that you might have loved her for even longer. You long to tell her about the exact moment you realised it, even though it is very unlikely that she will remember the exact event.

The day you realised you were in love with her is a day that gives you mixed feelings. Two girls in the year above you had cornered you after lunch, to laugh at the fact you had two mums. By that point, it was something you were very used to. Children could be cruel about love that they didn't understand. Especially if that was how they had been raised.

For once, Emma hadn't been with you, because she had just run back to her locker. So the girls had caught you on your own. They were bigger than you and mean looking. Of course, they had started with name calling and so the word dyke had been thrown at you. Ugly

and cold and so hard hitting, even if you wouldn't acknowledge the blow.

And that had been when Emma had appeared, expression calm but with thunder in her eyes. She had thrown her bag to the side and tackled the first girl, who had gone down with a sickening thud. Emma had, of course, come out on top. Bloody and bruised, with a split lip and a black eye, but victorious nonetheless.

You had held a wet paper towel to her lip, soothing it as much as you were able. She had looked you in the eye and told you that when it came to protecting you, she would always come out on top. That had been the moment you had realised.

But you know that you can't tell her. If anything, your longing to be honest merely proves that to you. It would be selfish on your part. In a friendship where you are given so much, it would be the most selfish act to tell her that. It would tear her life and your friendship apart. To tell her would be unfair, because you suppose that she must be happy. You can gauge this from the way her eyes sparkle again, whenever she talks to you, and you think it must be down to Killian. Even if you have no idea how.

Sometimes, there are moments when it takes more self-restraint than you knew you had to bite your tongue. When the two of you are alone, in the quiet moments, it is so hard for you not to say a word. So hard, that it is all you can do not to scream in frustration. So hard, in fact, that you have made the inside of your cheek bleed from biting it to restrain yourself. It takes a lot of physical effort on your part because how can anyone treat Emma like that? It baffles you.

To be perfectly candid, Emma is the one weak spot in the armour you have built for yourself. The walls you surround yourself are higher than anyone else can climb, they are impossible to breach. But for Emma, she can just walk right through, as though they were made of nothing more substantial than air. Emma has always been your exception.

It is a blessing in disguise, if you are honest with yourself. After all, everybody needs someone. You need Emma in your life and you know that she needs you in hers. It is a tried and tested system that works. Before, your needs had always been symbiotic. Before, they had always fully corresponded with one another. Recently you have found that it feels as though you are constantly trying to shift what you need to make it fit once again. Almost like trying to ram two jigsaw pieces together when they obviously are not meant to be joined together.

The closeness of the two of you is a vicious cycle. You spend all of your free time together, and when you are apart the two of you text constantly. You are always in contact with her and her constant presence keeps you intoxicated. As more time passes and you fall for her more deeply, even as you try to stop yourself, you find yourself dreaming about her.

The dreams are almost better than reality, because in your dreams she is yours. She is yours and the two of you are so happy together. Your dreams are bliss. That is, until you wake to find that you were dreaming. Until you wake to the bitter reality of another text from Emma informing you of Killian's latest transgression against her. You would be lying if you said it didn't tear your heart to pieces inside your chest.

You know that you should be able to make yourself stop thinking about her. You should be able to focus your mind and have it so that every thought you have isn't about her. You should be stronger than your love for her, your friendship should be enough. You often find yourself wondering whether, in the unlikely event that she ever works out how you feel for her, your friendship would survive. Would she feel betrayed?

You can't stop yourself from thinking about her. Everything about you, your entire being, is completely immersed in her. You try to stop, truly you do, but you know that there is no use in trying. Acceptance would probably be what is best for you. After all, what is the use in trying to stave off the inevitable?

You love her, it is that simple. Even as you try to fight it, try to keep it platonic, you know it. You are in too deep to escape. Not that you're complaining, as such. Emma is a wonderful person, and a good choice in your first love. She is all light and happiness and understanding and kindness. So being in love with her, your best friend, is not necessarily a bad thing. But from what you have garnered about unrequited love, it is a painful thing. Books and films have taught you that much. You figure you can only go so long without getting burnt.

Worst case scenario, in your head, would be Emma working out your feelings for her? As unlikely as you know it is, what would you do if she freaked out? Since the two of you were tiny she had been your biggest protector, your constant companion. For her your relationship has always been strictly platonic. Absolutely no homo-romantic undertones to date.

The bond between the two of you is incredibly strong, nigh on unbreakable. Yet you don't want to take the chance to try and break it. Between the two of you there is a tried and tested comfort system. A system of having someone to completely rely upon, no matter what. You aren't quite sure how you would cope with the world without Emma in your life. There are some things that you think even your friendship could not come back from.

There was a night, not so long ago, when Emma had compared you to a sister. She had told you, plainly, that you were like the sister she had never had. The thought behind it had been incredibly sweet, but you would be lying to yourself if you didn't acknowledge exactly how much it had made you cringe. It had made you cringe more than you had thought was possible. The thing that makes it worse is that you were literal seconds away from ruining everything. You had both been drinking heavily that night, but that one sentence had sobered you up completely.

With every passing day, possibly with every hour, it gets harder and harder not to tell her how you feel. Sometimes, in the moments when the two of you are alone, she looks at you. And the look in her eyes is one that makes you forget how to breathe, how to think, how to live with your secrets. In those moments it takes everything in you to remind yourself that the two of you are just friends.

Just friends. Best friends. Almost like sisters. Close enough for the girl you love to compare you to the sister she never had. That closeness thrills you, knowing that someone loves you so much, but it also breaks your heart. Because you know it will never quite be what you want it to be.

One day, you go down to the docks to try and escape your thoughts. There is something about the way the water moves underneath the pier that makes you forget all of your worries, just for a moment. It has always been the case. You have your shoes off and by your side, feet dangling off the end of the pier, almost touching the calm surface of the water beneath.

At some point, Emma comes to join you. Calmly, she sits beside you, her shoulder brushing against yours. Her presence makes you smile, as it always does. She draws you out of your thoughts, a ray of sunshine drawing you back into the world.

Soon enough the two of you are laughing. She has you laughing so hard that your eyes stream and your side stings from the stitch you have given yourself. Playfully, she shoves you and you pretend to

scowl at her. A mock look of displeasure takes over your features, but it all but melts off of your face when you look at her once again.

Once again, her eyes are sparkling bright and alive and happy. She laughs to herself and at you, breathless and happy and escaping her lips with the same second nature ease as breathing. For a moment, a mere moment, you can convince yourself that the look on her face and the laughter leaving her lips are just for you.

And in that mere moment, you could swear that something changes. It might be due to holding yourself back for so long. For telling yourself no and denying yourself something over and over again. Or it might just be you taking leave of your senses. It might just be the madness of the moment, or your ability to function normally around her faltering more than usual or something, because for a moment you find yourself staring intently at her lips.

Then, as you stare at her, her lips move. And while it is mesmerising unto the last, her words register, and you find yourself taken aback. You find yourself staring at her in shock to find her smirking at you in a far too knowing way. The look on her face is so far from innocent that it sends a shock to her system. Somehow, you could swear that moment makes you love her even more.

“What?” You hear yourself ask once her words have registered and you’ve had a second to process. You curse yourself for how shrill your voice sounds in that second, because it is almost a squeak. Which is faintly irritating because you are normally more dignified than that.

“I broke up with Killian.” It is a statement and nothing more. So offhand that she could almost be commenting on the weather. She is serene and seems to be extremely confident in her decision. It shocks you all the more, right down to your very core. There is something in her voice, a knowing edge, that makes you think she might be privy to something that you are not.

All you can do, for a solid minute, is stare at her. You find yourself at a loss for words. Which is a new concept to you. Of course, you’re ecstatic too. Even as you stare at her you can feel a small part of yourself daring to hope. In a way that you have never allowed yourself to before, you begin to hope. Although you know that you shouldn’t, you do hope.

You know that it is stupid, but as you study your face, you can’t bring yourself to care. There is something in her face, something that almost speaks of an invitation. The way she looks at you is so warm, so open and so full of something that you can’t quite seem to name.

She is looking at you, and the look in her eyes speaks to something within you.

Before you can stop yourself, almost before you know what you're doing, you are kissing her. Your lips are pressed against hers and it feels soft and warm and oh dear god the relief you feel is palpable. Then you register that she is frozen against you and her lips are not moving and oh shit.

You think that you must have just made the biggest mistake of your life so far. You can feel the beginnings of some level of hysteria starting to rise up within you, even though your lips have only been pressed against hers for scarcely a second. For a second, you are about to pull away. To pull away and run like hell, to go home and cry it all out in the arms of your mothers.

Just as you are about to tear yourself away, to make your apologies and then turn tail and run, you feel Emma start to respond. She starts to move against you and relief wells up in you like you didn't know it could. Her lips begin to move against yours, barely even there at first. Ghosting, questing, searching.

She pulls you closer to her as her lips press more firmly against yours. One of her hands finds its way into your hair as the other locks around your waist. She holds you to her, so close that it is almost as though she can't quite bare to let you go. You find yourself trembling against her, breath escaping through your nose, lips refusing to part from hers for even a second.

Stubbornly, you keep your eyes firmly closed because you are mostly convinced that this is one of your wildest dreams. If you keep your eyes closed, your dream will continue. You find yourself worrying that if you open your eyes it will all be over. Then you may find that none of this was ever real and that isn't a reality you want to deal with.

Her tongue brushes against your lower lip and you can admit that it drives you slightly crazy. That is the moment in which you stop holding yourself back. You figure to hell with it. If you wake up tomorrow morning to find that this is a dream, if you find that your best friend is still loved up with her jerk of her boyfriend, then at least you will have your dreams to console you.

You practically throw yourself at her, kissing her back with everything you have, with everything in you. For a split second you feel her pause against you as a shudder runs through her. You find that you are the first to pull away, breathless and dizzy and

overwhelmed. The whimper you hear in response to this is so delicious that you can hardly bear it. You're sorely tempted to reattach your lips to Emma's and never remove them again.

You think, if this is a dream, you don't want the kiss to be interrupted by something as trivial as waking up. Waking up at this moment would be rather rude of your psyche.

Slowly, you open your eyes. Before you, Emma stands, prettily flustered. Her cheeks are dusted with red and her eyes are glossed over and you can't help but feel proud at being the cause of the dreamy expression on her face. Laughing softly, you think about how, if this is a dream, it has been such a wonderful one.

She looks at you and it sets your heart thundering in your chest. You never would have thought that a look would be enough to quicken your pulse. But it is. It breaks you a little bit that you have dreamed up this whole thing, but you still wouldn't change it for the world. The thought of it still brings tears to your eyes, because it is a little bitter sweet. A single, solitary tear runs down your cheek and she catches it before it can run away, wiping it with the pad of her thumb.

Closing your eyes again, you fight against the onslaught of sadness that fights to take over you. Feeling her pull you to her once again, she rests her chin gently against the top of your head. She has always had the height advantage and the solidity of her presence when mixed with the realness of the moment makes this seem like reality. Still, you think it must be something that you have concocted in your head. You can't quite seem to stop yourself from asking.

"Is this a dream?"

Emma chuckles at that, all water and hitched breath.

"Regina, look at me." She pulls back slightly so that she can look at you. She meets your eyes and there is something exceptionally soft about her. "Does it look like you're dreaming?"

Ever so slightly you nod your head because you have had this exact dream several times. It has never quite been this realistic but so. Sighing, she pulls you back to her, so that you are pressed firmly together. With one hand gently cupping your face, keeping her eyes on you, your lips meet again. She sighs again with her lips pressed to yours, as though she would be content to stay like this. This kiss is slow and searching and soft. You can tell that she is trying to convey something to you. And you would have to say that her message is conveyed. You pull back, just for a moment, so that you can search

her eyes for the thing you need to see.

Of their own accord your hands come up to cup either side of her face. Gently, you pull her closer to you and it is almost as if she could never be close enough. This time, as you kiss her, it becomes much more frenzied than before, all tongues and heat and passion. You don't think you've ever been kissed like this before.

It is fast and slightly messy and it steals the breath from your lungs. You find that you can't quite draw breath in fast enough. This time it is Emma who pulls away, panting for breath and looking thoroughly dazed.

She takes a deep breath in, releasing the words "I love you" on the exhale. It is so quiet that you're not quite sure that you are supposed to hear it. She must hear your strangled gasp and in response you hear her gulp. Watching as the panic takes over her face, she tenses against you and tries to move away.

However, you are kissing her again already, words of love leaving you as your lips meet, again and again.

Upon re-evaluation, you think that perhaps your relationship isn't quite as platonic as you thought. You find that you are very happy about that fact.

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